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House Panel Picks 170 to Investigate Kennedy and King Slayings

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15 (UPI)—The House Committee on Assassinations, meeting formally for the first time, announced today that a study group of 170 persons would conduct what it hoped will be the definitive investigations of the murders of President Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Representative Thomas M. Downing, Democrat of Virginia, the committee chairman until he retires at the end of this year, told reporters after a two-hour closed session: "We're going down every street until we get a blind alley. Congress mandated us to do a thorough job."

Walter Fauntroy, Democratic delegate from the District of Columbia and the newly named chairman of a subcommittee to investigate the King slaying, said: 'We want to find out what the evidence is and follow it where it leads, no matter where."

A subcommittee concentrating on the Kennedy killing 13 years ago this month will be headed by Representative Richardson Preyer, Democrat of North Carolina.

Mr. Downing said that the full committee had asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency for all documents and memoranda pertaining to the assassinations. An aide said that a two-foot-high stack of documents already had been received from the C.I.A.

Reported Hoover Memo

Mr. Downing said that he had not yet seen a reported 1964 memo from F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover that supposedly stated that Lee Harvey Oswald told Cuban officials he was going to kill President Kennedy more than a month before he actually did so.

The assassin was known to have visited the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City before President Kennedy was shot.

The Hoover memo, according to press reports, was found after a new search of bureau files at the committee's request.

Representative Christopher J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, another member of the committee, said that the panel should "make it one of its first orders of business to obtain and evaluate" that document.

Mr. Downing, who is expected to be replaced as chairman by Representative Henry B. Gonzalez, Democrat of Texas, when the new Contress convenes in January, said an investigative crew of 170 "sounds like a lot of people."

But he said that it actually is a "bare bones staff" for the immense job, compared to that used by the Warren Commission, which investigated the Kennedy assassination.

The Warren Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in assassinating President Kennedy. Evidence that has come to light since thtn indicates that the F.B.I. and C.I.A. knew more about the assassin's Cuban connections than was given the Warren panel and subsequent Congressional investigative bodies.